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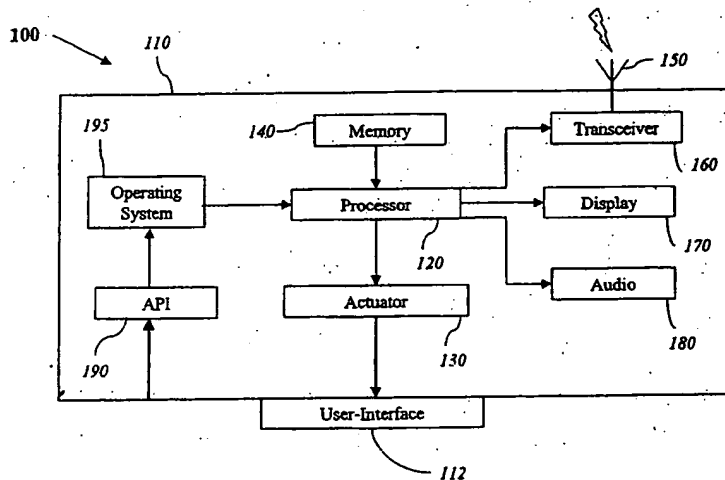
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(54) Title: HAPTIC MESSAGING IN HANDHELD COMMUNICATION DEVICES



(57) Abstract: Embodiments of the invention relate to methods and systems for providing customized "haptic messaging" to users of handheld communication devices (110) in a variety of applications. In one embodiment, a method of haptic messaging includes: receiving an input signal associated with an actuation of a user-interface member (112); determining a haptic code associated with the actuation; and including the haptic code in an output signal to be sent to a remote handheld communication device (10). In another embodiment, a method of haptic messaging includes: receiving an input signal; outputting a request relating to a contact with a user-interface member (112) coupled to a handheld communication device (110); and providing a control signal associated with the contact to an actuator (130) coupled to the handheld communication device (110), the control signal being configured to

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HAPTIC MESSAGING IN HANDHELD COMMUNICATION DEVICES

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/431,662, filed on December 8, 2002, the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to haptic-feedback systems. More specifically, embodiments of the present invention relate to using customized haptic effects in a variety of applications to convey information to users of handheld communication devices.

BACKGROUND

As handheld communication devices become part of everyday life, device manufacturers and service providers strive to enhance the versatility and performance of such devices.

Handheld communication devices in the art (e.g., mobile phones, pagers, personal digital assistants (PDAs), etc.) typically use auditory and visual cues to alert a user when incoming messages, such as voice calls and emails, are received. Such auditory and visual alerts, however, have the disadvantages of being distracting in some situations (e.g., during driving), or annoying in others (e.g., during a meeting or a concert). Although vibratory alerts are made available in some communication devices such as cellular phones, such vibratory effects cannot be customized or personalized according to applications, thus conveying little information to the user. A need, therefore, exists in the art for a new sensory modality that delivers information to users of handheld communication devices in a personalized fashion.

SUMMARY

Embodiments of the invention relate to methods and systems for providing customized "haptic messaging" to users of handheld communication devices in a variety of applications.

In one embodiment, a method of haptic messaging includes: receiving an input signal associated with an actuation of a user-interface member; determining a haptic code associated with the actuation; and including the haptic code in an output signal to be sent to a remote handheld communication device.

the scope of the invention in any manner. One skilled in the art would also recognize that various changes and modifications can be made herein, without departing from the principles and scope of the invention.

FIG. 1 depicts a block diagram of a handheld communication device 100 according to an embodiment of the invention. It will be appreciated that various elements are shown in schematic form for illustrative purposes and are not drawn to scale. It will also be appreciated that many alternative ways of practicing the present invention exist. Accordingly, various changes and modifications may be made herein, without departing from the principles and scope of the invention.

Device 100 includes a device body including a housing 110 and a user-interface 112; a processor 120; at least one actuator 130 in communication with processor 120; and a memory 140 in communication with processor 120. Device 100 also includes an antenna 150 and a transceiver 160, in communication with processor 120. Device 100 additionally includes a display module 170 and an audio module 180, in communication with processor 120. Display module 170 may include, for example, a liquid crystal device. Audio means 180 may include, for example, a speaker, a microphone, and the like.

For purpose of illustration in the embodiment of FIG. 1, processor 120, actuator 130, and memory 140 are shown to be enclosed within and coupled to the device body. Such an illustration, however, should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention in any manner. In alternative embodiments, actuator 130 may, for example, be coupled to the outside of housing 110, or embedded in housing 110 via a suitable mechanism. Further, user-interface 112 may include one or more user-interface members. As used herein, a user-interface member includes, without limitation, a key pad having one or more keys, one or more buttons, a touch screen or touch pad, a scroll wheel, a direction pad, a trackball, a knob, a miniature joystick, or other user-interface means known in the art.

Device 100 further includes an API (Application Program Interface) 190, working in conjunction with an operating system 195. A device driver (not shown) may optionally provide an interface between operating system 195 and processor 120.

Memory 140 of device 100 stores a program code that includes instructions to cause processor 120 to perform various tasks. The following description provides some examples.

FIG. 2 shows a flowchart 200 depicting a method of using customized haptic effects to convey information to users of handheld communication devices, according to an embodiment of the invention. At step 210, an input signal associated with an event is received. At step 220, a source of the event is determined and a control signal is selected

In yet another embodiment, the input signal may include a communication signal associated with a status event, for example, received via antenna 150 and transceiver 160 of FIG. 1. Examples of a status event include, but are not limited to: an advertisement (e.g., sale) event, a one-to-one marketing event, a business-transaction event, a stock-trading event, a weather-forecast event, a sports (or game) event, an entertainment event, and an emergency (e.g., 911) event. In this scenario, the source may be associated with a characteristic that distinctly identifies the sender and/or the nature of a status event, such as the phone number of the handheld user's stock broker, the e-mail address of the user's favorite store, the logo associated with the user's favorite TV or radio station, and so on.

In one embodiment, an event of interest can be accompanied by a distinct haptic effect, or overlapping haptic effects, conveying to the user customized information such as "who is calling," "what is happening," and so on. The user can also be allowed to update the haptic lookup table, e.g., to include new events, and/or to modify the mappings between the existing events of interest and the corresponding haptic effects.

Moreover, a specific haptic effect can be assigned to any incoming signal event whose source is unknown, so as to alert the user that the incoming message is from an un-identifiable or sender.

As used herein, the term "handheld communication device" includes, without limitation, a mobile phone such as a cellular phone or a satellite phone, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a cordless telephone, a pager, a two-way radio, a handheld or portable computer, a game console controller, a personal gaming device, an MP3 player, or other personal electronic devices known in the art that are equipped with communication or networking capabilities.

In one embodiment, the aforementioned haptic effects can be used as haptic ringers (e.g., counterparts to auditory ring tones) that are customized or personalized to convey information to the user about various events of interest. By way of example, a haptic ringer associated with a call from a loved one (e.g., the user's spouse) may comprise low-amplitude and high frequency vibrations that impart gentle sensations to the user. In contrast, a haptic ringer associated with an emergency event (such as a 911-call) may comprise jolt-like pulses that impart pounding sensations to the user.

In contrast with conventional auditory ring tones, the aforementioned haptic effects (e.g., haptic ringers) are more desirable in an environment where extraneous auditory signals are prohibited (e.g., during a meeting or a concert), and/or where it is difficult to distinguish auditory signals (e.g., in a loud environment such as an airport). The haptic ringers are also

configured according to a predetermined scheme or protocol that includes, for example, a table of haptic codes (some of which may be associated with one or more haptic logos) versus control signals for rendering the corresponding haptic effects. In this way, a processor in the handheld communication device can look up the corresponding control signal from the table based on the extracted haptic code, and output the selected control signal to the actuator for rendering the desired haptic effect.

In the embodiments of FIG. 2 or 3, the handheld communication device (or the haptic code) may be programmed such that the haptic effect is output immediately, or at a prescribed time after receiving the input signal, as desired in applications. The haptic effects can also be triggered by, or synchronized with, other occurrences.

A handheld communication device may be further configured such that some of its user-interface members (such as those described above) are each associated with a haptic code, e.g., according to a predetermined scheme or protocol. In one embodiment, some of these haptic codes may be associated with haptic effects that emulate expressions or behaviors, such as "laugh," "giggle," "hug," "high-five," "heartbeat," "pet purring," etc. This allows haptic effects to be transmitted and experienced, e.g., in an interactive conversation or a chat session, by pressing or manipulating such members.

By way of example, suppose that user A (termed "Alice" herein) is engaged in a chat session with user B (termed "Bob" herein) via their respective mobile phones. In one embodiment, when Bob tells Alice a joke, Alice can respond by sending a "laugh" sensation to Bob, e.g., by pressing a key on her mobile phone that is assigned with a haptic code corresponding to a laugh sensation. This causes a signal to be transmitted from Alice's phone to Bob's phone, and a corresponding haptic effect to be output to Bob's phone (and thereby experienced by Bob). In alternative embodiments, Alice can include a haptic code in an outgoing message (which may also contain a video image such as a picture taken by her mobile phone, and/or a graphical feature such as an emoticon emulating a smiley face) to be transmitted to Bob, e.g., by pressing the corresponding user-interface member. The haptic code causes a haptic effect to be output when the message is delivered to a remote device such as Bob's mobile phone. In one embodiment, the haptic effect may be correlated or synchronized with the displaying of a video image contained in the message. In another embodiment, the generation of the haptic effect based on the haptic code may be carried out in a manner similar to that described above with respect to the embodiment of FIG. 3.

FIG. 4 depicts a flowchart 400 illustrating a method of a method of haptically encoding communication signals, according to an embodiment of the invention. At step 410,

based on the virtual touch indicator, a haptic code associated with the user-interface member at play, or other predetermined scheme. The input signal at step 510 may also include a virtual touch indicator along with a virtual touch signal for rendering the desired haptic effect. In this case, the control signal at step 530 may be based on the virtual touch signal.

Referring back to the chat session between Alice and Bob, by way of example at the end of their chat session, Alice may wish to send Bob a "high-five." She sends to Bob's mobile phone a signal including a virtual touch indicator, which in turn prompts a request that Bob be in contact with a user-interface member coupled to his phone, such as a direction pad (e.g., by putting his fingers on the individual keys of the direction pad), a key pad, a touch screen, a trackball, a joystick, or the like. The control signal for rendering a haptic effect that emulates a "high-five" may be based on the haptic code associated with the user-interface member, transmitted with the input signal from Alice, and/or other predetermined scheme.

Interactive virtual touch can also be engaged between users of handheld communication devices, where the manipulation of a user-interface member on one handheld communication device is transmitted possibly in substantially real-time to another handheld device and experienced by its user, and vice versa. FIG. 6 depicts a flowchart 600 illustrating a method of providing interactive virtual touch in one embodiment of the present invention. In the embodiment shown, a handheld communication device first receives an input signal including a virtual touch indicator at step 610. A distinctive haptic ringer may, for example, accompany the arrival of the virtual touch indicator, identifying the sender and the nature of the input signal. The handheld communication device may then perform any necessary initialization to enable the communication at step 620, which may also include requesting a contact with a particular user-interface member coupled to the handheld communication device at step 625. The handheld communication device subsequently receives a virtual touch signal in the communication associated with the desired haptic effect at step 630. The handheld communication device provides the haptic effect at step 640, e.g., by applying the virtual touch signal to an actuator coupled to the user-interface member.

In one embodiment, the virtual touch signal may be associated with the manipulation of a user-interface member on a remote handheld device and transmitted in substantially real-time. And the user on the receiving end may respond by acting in a similar fashion, so as to emulate an interactive touch. Any schemes for delivering virtual touch to users of handheld communication devices may be used.

Haptic effects can also be used to enhance and complement the information content communicated between handheld communication devices. In one embodiment, a plurality of

effect may include one or more pulse or jolt sensations, where the number of pulses is proportional to the number of miles between the position of the handheld device and the destination.

Processors described above (including processor 120 of FIG. 1) can include, for example, one or more digital logical processors capable of processing input, execute algorithms, and generate output as necessary to perform various tasks, such as those described above. Such processors/controllers may include a microprocessor, an Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC), and state machines. Such processors include, or may be in communication with, media (including memory 140 of FIG. 1). Such media include, for example, computer readable media, which stores program code that, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform the steps described herein. Embodiments of computer-readable media include, but are not limited to, an electronic, optical, magnetic, or other storage or transmission device capable of providing a processor, such as the processor in a web server, with computer-readable instructions. Other examples of suitable media include, but are not limited to, a floppy disk, CD-ROM, magnetic disk, memory chip, ROM, RAM, ASIC, configured processor, all optical media, all magnetic tape or other magnetic media, or any other medium from which a computer processor can read. Also, various other forms of computer-readable media may transmit or carry instructions to a computer, including a router, private or public network, or other transmission device or channel.

Program code and associated application programs related to various applications may also reside on a remote source, such as a network resource, a Web server, a remote handheld communication device or computer, which can be transmitted or downloaded to a handheld communication device on a regular or predetermined basis. Haptic effects (along with associated control signals) can also be downloaded or transmitted from a remote source, as described above.

Actuators described above (including actuator 130 shown in FIG. 1) can include, for example, a pager motor, an eccentric rotating motor, a harmonic eccentric rotating motor, a voice coil, a solenoid, a resistive actuator, a piezoelectric actuator, an electro-active polymer actuator, or other types of active/passive actuators suitable for generating haptic effects. U.S. Patent Nos. 6,429,846 and 6,424,333 disclose further details relating to some of these actuators, both of which are incorporated in full herein by reference. In some embodiments, one or more actuators may be implemented in a handheld communication device, configured to deliver appropriate haptic effects. It will be appreciated that various control schemes can

at a movie theater. Later, Bob's mobile phone vibrates with the first haptic effect. Bob wants to speak with Alice, for example, to make plans to meet later. So Bob answers the phone and quickly exits the theater to talk with Alice.

Bob's mobile phone can also include a personal schedule/calendar application. After speaking with Alice, Bob can enter an entry in the calendar at the 7:00PM time mark -- "Meet Alice". Bob can also choose a fourth haptic effect to associate with the calendar entry. The mobile phone can be programmed to output the fourth haptic effect fifteen minutes before the time entry of the calendar (i.e., at 6:45PM).

Bob's mobile phone can be equipped with GPS capability, along with an associated application program for location determination. Bob can also store addresses of various locations of interest in the application program. In one embodiment, Bob can be on the road. Bob's mobile phone vibrates with a distinct fifth haptic effect. Bob recognizes the fifth haptic effect being associated with the haptic logo of his favorite electronics store. He then checks with the application program, and receives a sixth haptic effect associated with the distance between his current position and the store location. Bob then decides to make a stop at the store.

A haptically-enabled handheld communication device of the invention may be further used as a two-way haptic remote control, for example, for controlling a remote system such as a Television set or a multimedia system. In one embodiment, the events as referred to above may be related to program channels shown on the remote system, each identified by a channel number (which may be used as the "source"), for instance. The corresponding haptic effects may be customized on a per-channel basis. Such haptic effects can serve to inform a user as to which channel is on, as a user is channel-surfing by way of this haptic remote control, so that the user need not to look up the display screen.

FIG. 9 depicts a flowchart illustrating a method for providing haptic effects to a remote control in one embodiment of the present invention. In the embodiment shown, the remote control sends a command signal to a remote system at step 910. As with a conventional remote control, the signal may or may not reach the television. The remote control then determines whether a feedback signal has been received at step 920. If the remote control receives a feedback signal, the remote control provides a first haptic effect at step 930. If not, the remote control provides a second haptic effect at step 940.

The first haptic effect can be further customized according to the received feedback signal. In one embodiment, the remote system provides information (e.g., via the feedback signal) to the remote control regarding the state of the display, e.g., based on a predetermined

That which is claimed is:

1. A method, comprising:
receiving an input signal associated with an actuation of a user-interface member;
determining a haptic code associated with the actuation; and
including the haptic code in an output signal.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising sending the output signal to a remote handheld communication device.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising including in the output signal at least one of a message, a video image, and a graphical feature.
4. The method of claim 1 further comprising making the determination is based on a predetermined scheme.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the user-interface member includes at least one of a key, a button, a key pad, a direction pad, a touch screen, a scroll wheel, a mini-joystick, a trackball, and a knob.
6. A method, comprising:
receiving an input signal;
outputting a request relating to a contact with a user-interface member coupled to a handheld communication device; and
providing a control signal associated with the contact to an actuator coupled to the handheld communication device, the control signal configured to cause the actuator to output a haptic effect associated with the input signal.
7. The method of claim 6 further comprising extracting a haptic code from the input signal, the control signal being based at least in part on the haptic code.
8. The method of claim 6 further comprising causing a content of the input signal to be displayed, the content includes at least one of a message, a video image, and a graphical feature.
9. The method of claim 6 wherein the user-interface member includes one of a key, a button, a key pad, a direction pad, a touch screen, a scroll wheel, a mini-joystick, a trackball, and a knob.
10. A computer-readable medium on which is encoded program code, comprising:
program code for receiving an input signal associated with an actuation of a user-interface member;
program code for determining a haptic code associated with the actuation; and
program code for including the haptic code in an output signal.

a memory in communication with the processor, the memory storing program code executable by the processor, including:

program code for receiving an input signal associated with an actuation of the user-interface member;

program code for determining a haptic code associated with the actuation; and

program code for including the haptic code in an output signal.

20. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the body is included in a handheld communication device.

21. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the handheld communication device includes one of a cellular phone, a satellite phone, a cordless phone, a personal digital assistant, a pager, a two-way radio, a portable computer, a game console controller, a personal gaming device, and an MP3 player.

22. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the user-interface member includes at least one of a key, a button, a key pad, a direction pad, a touch screen, a scroll wheel, a mini-joystick, a trackball, and a knob.

23. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the memory further stores program code for sending the output signal to a remote handheld communication device

24. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the memory further stores program code for including in the output signal at least one of a message, a video image, and a graphical feature.

25. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the user-interface member is one of a plurality of user-interface members coupled to the body, the memory further storing a plurality of haptic codes, each associated with one of the plurality of user-interface members according to a predetermined scheme.

26. The apparatus, comprising:

a user-interface member coupled to a body;

a processor;

an actuator coupled to the body and in communication with the processor; and

a memory in communication with the processor, the memory storing program code executable by the processor, including:

program code for receiving an input signal;

program code for outputting a request relating to a contact with the user-interface member; and

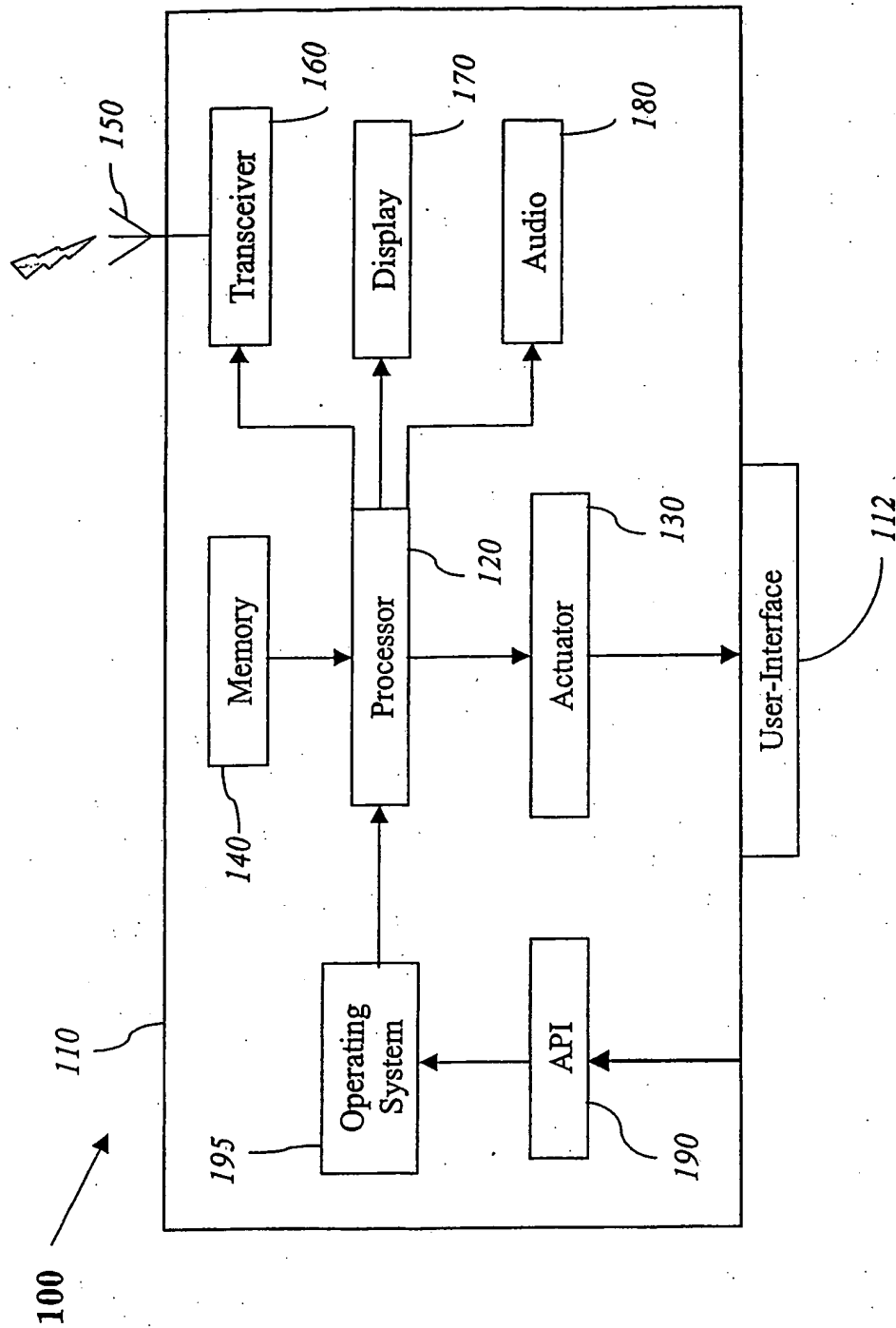


FIG. 1

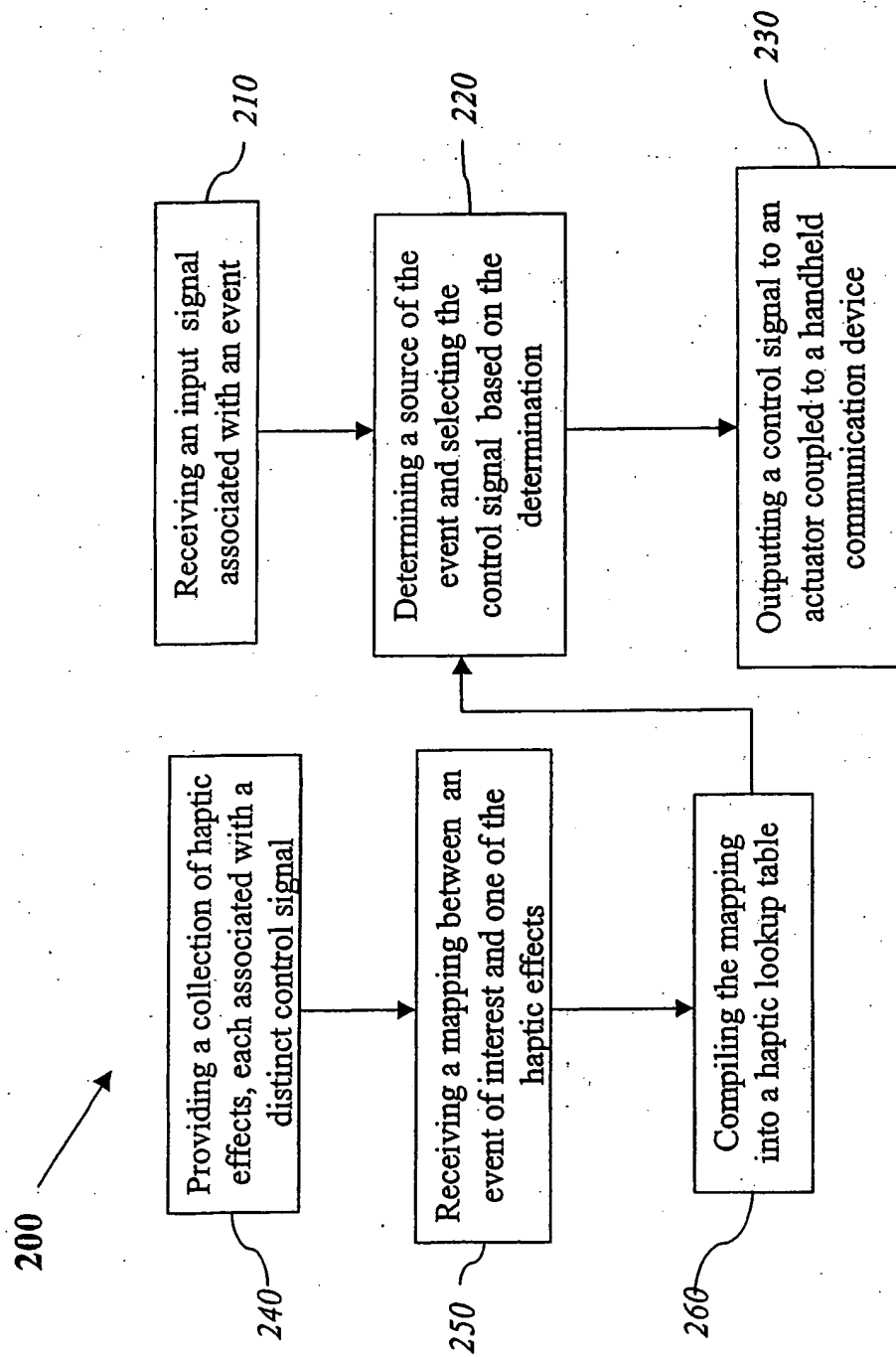


FIG.2

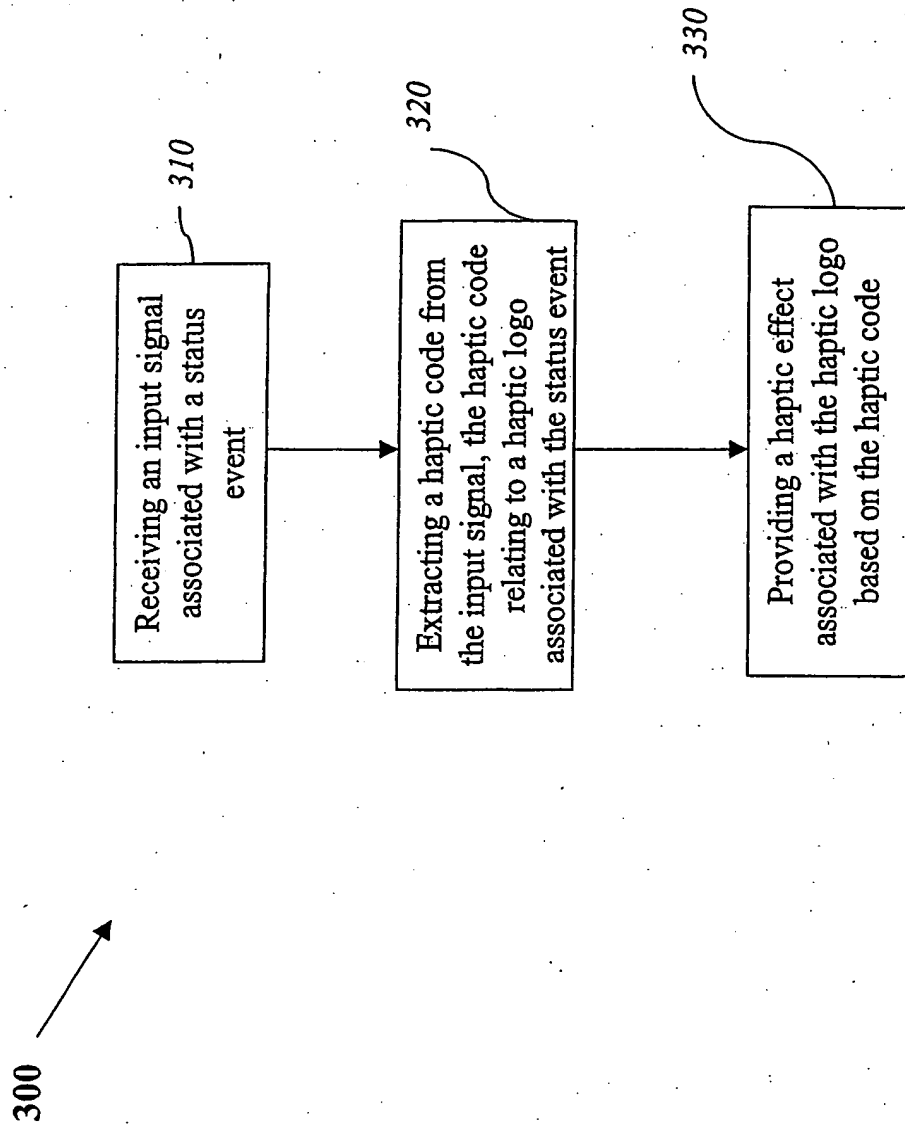


FIG. 3

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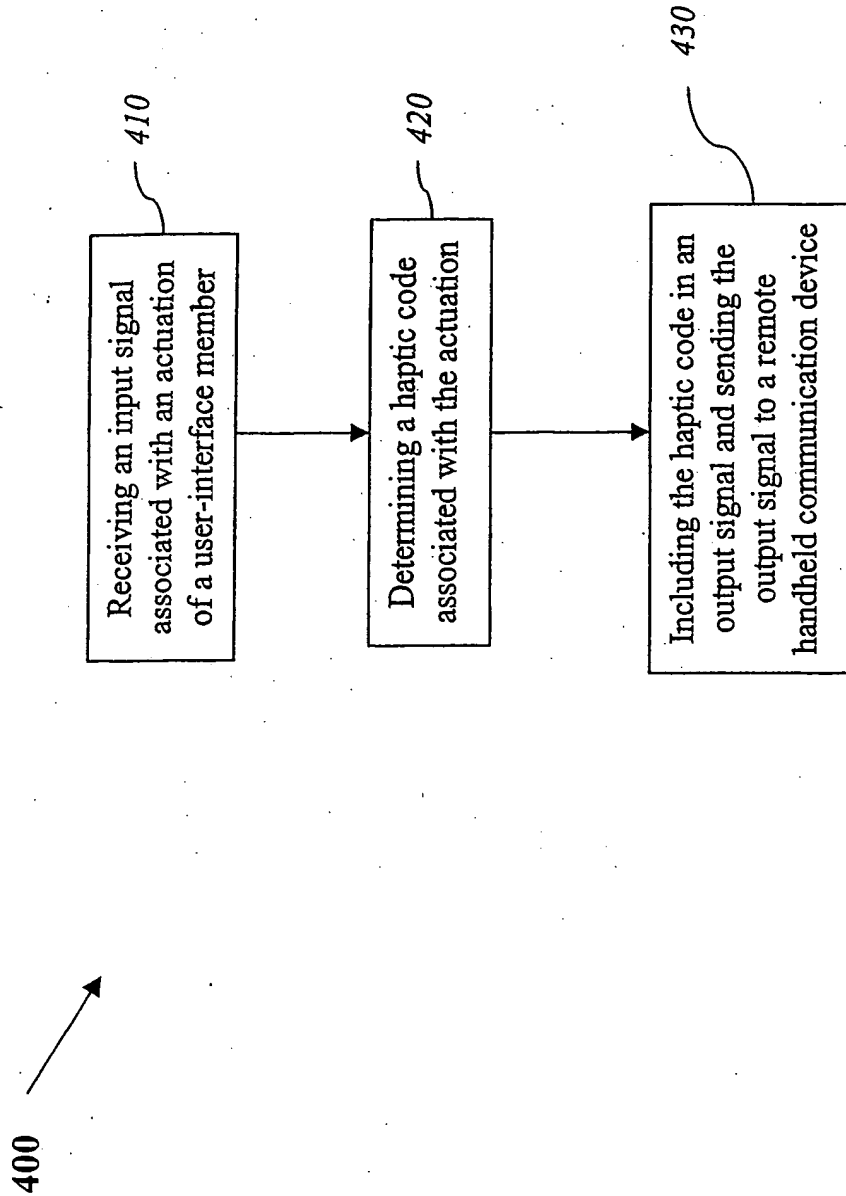


FIG. 4

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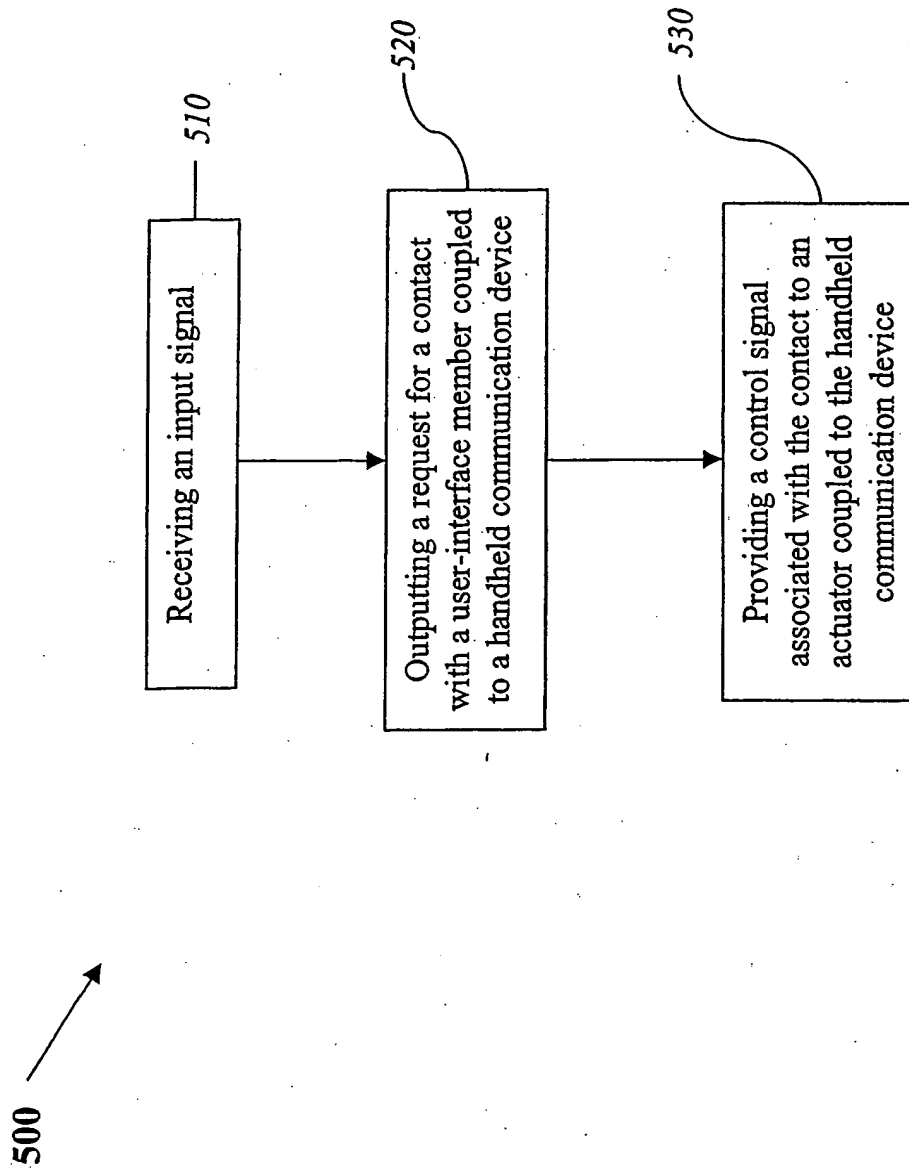


FIG. 5

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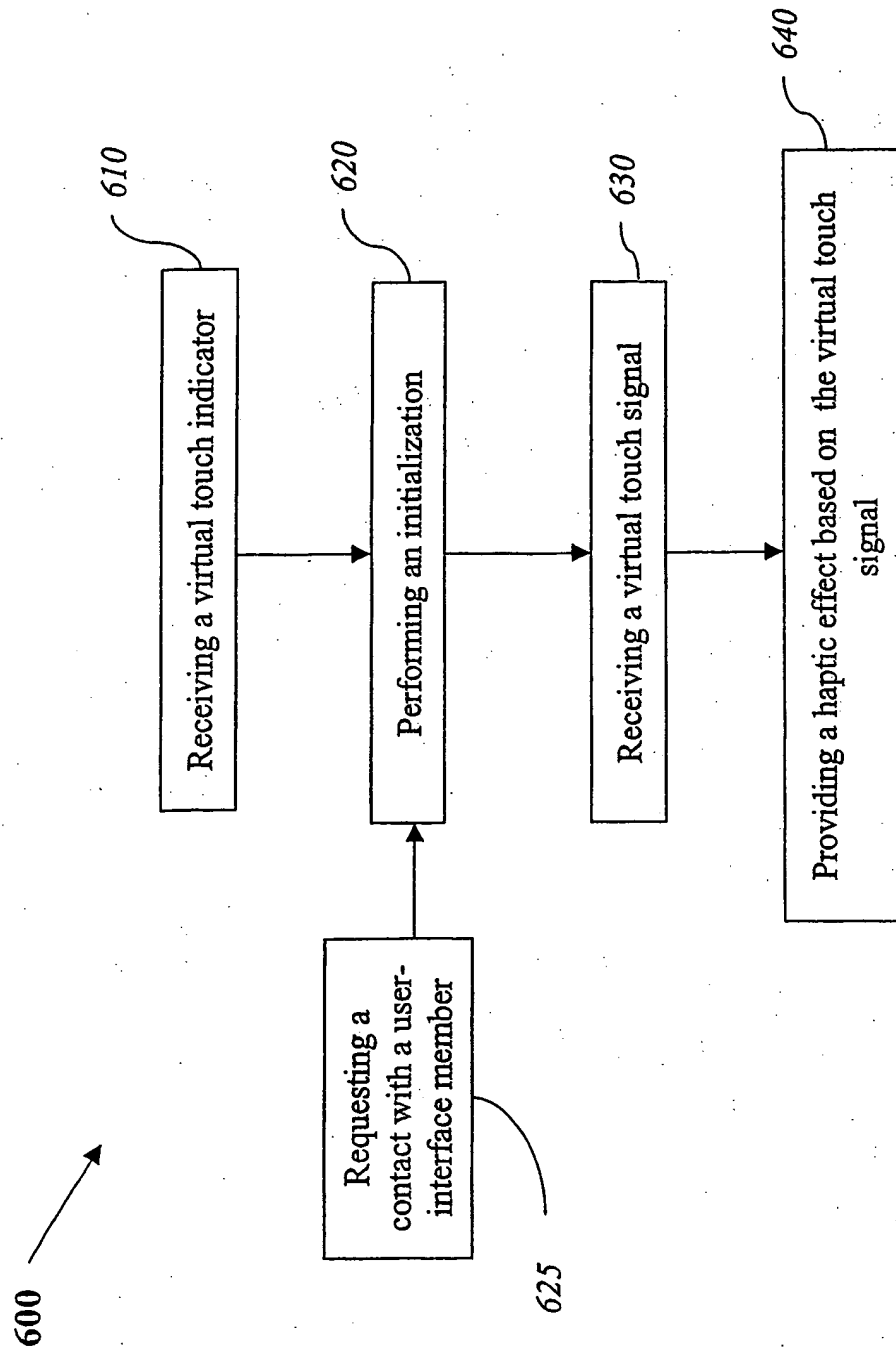


FIG. 6

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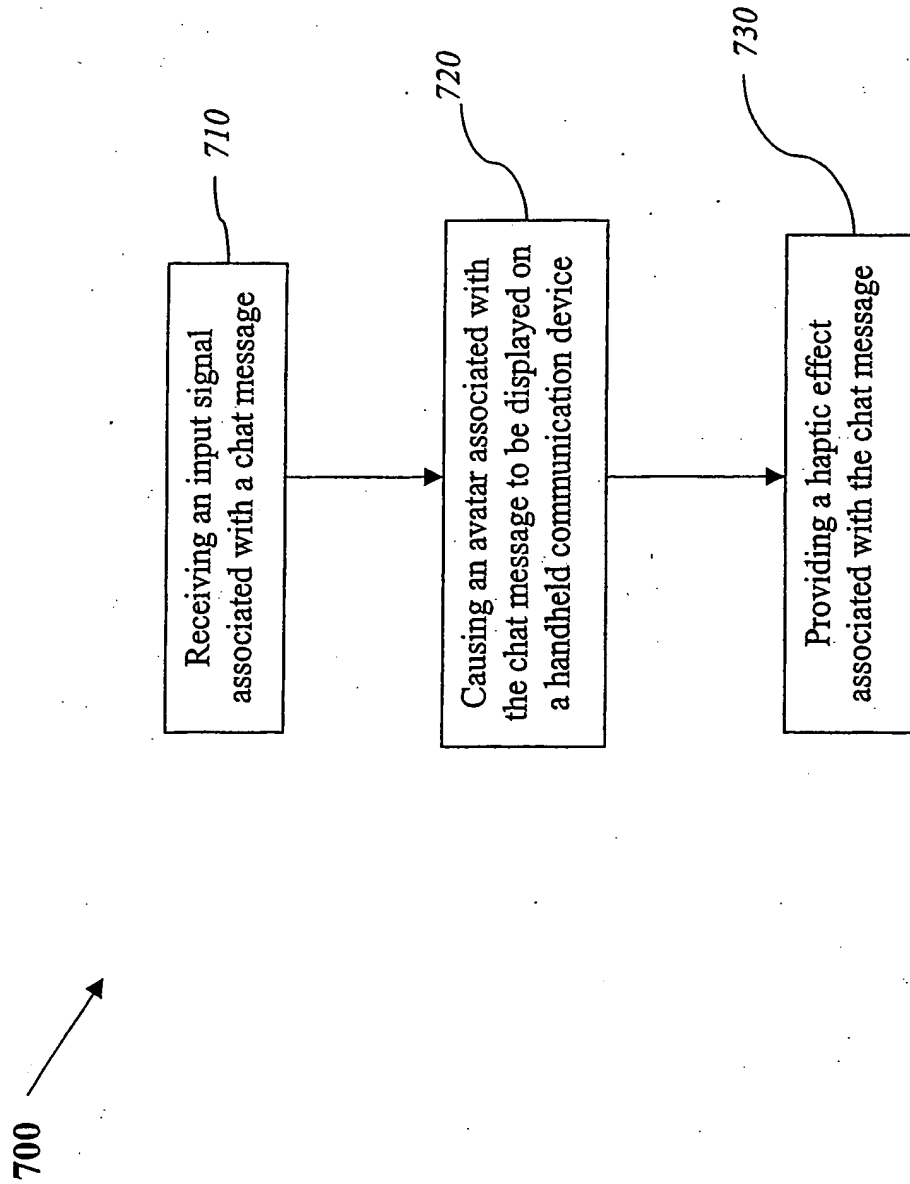


FIG. 7

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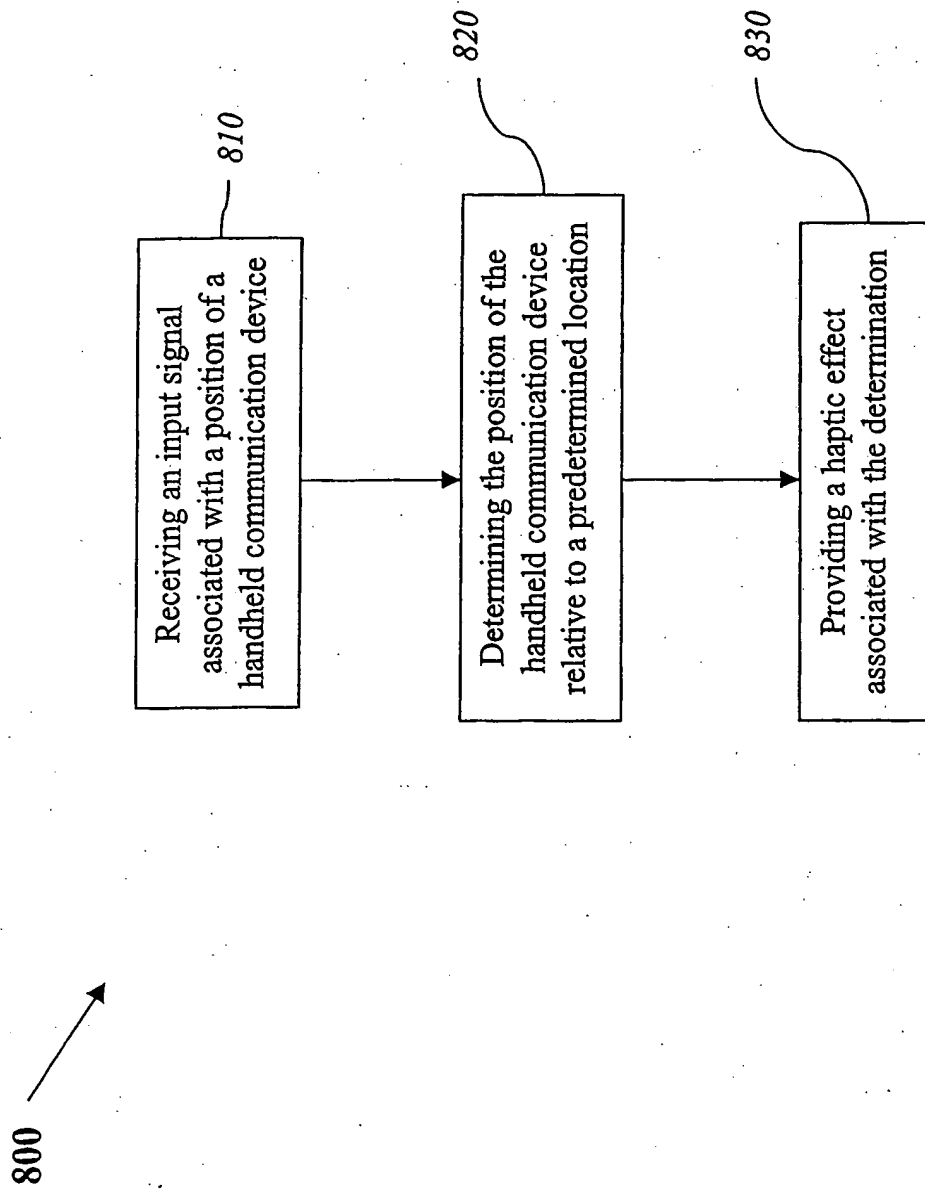


FIG. 8

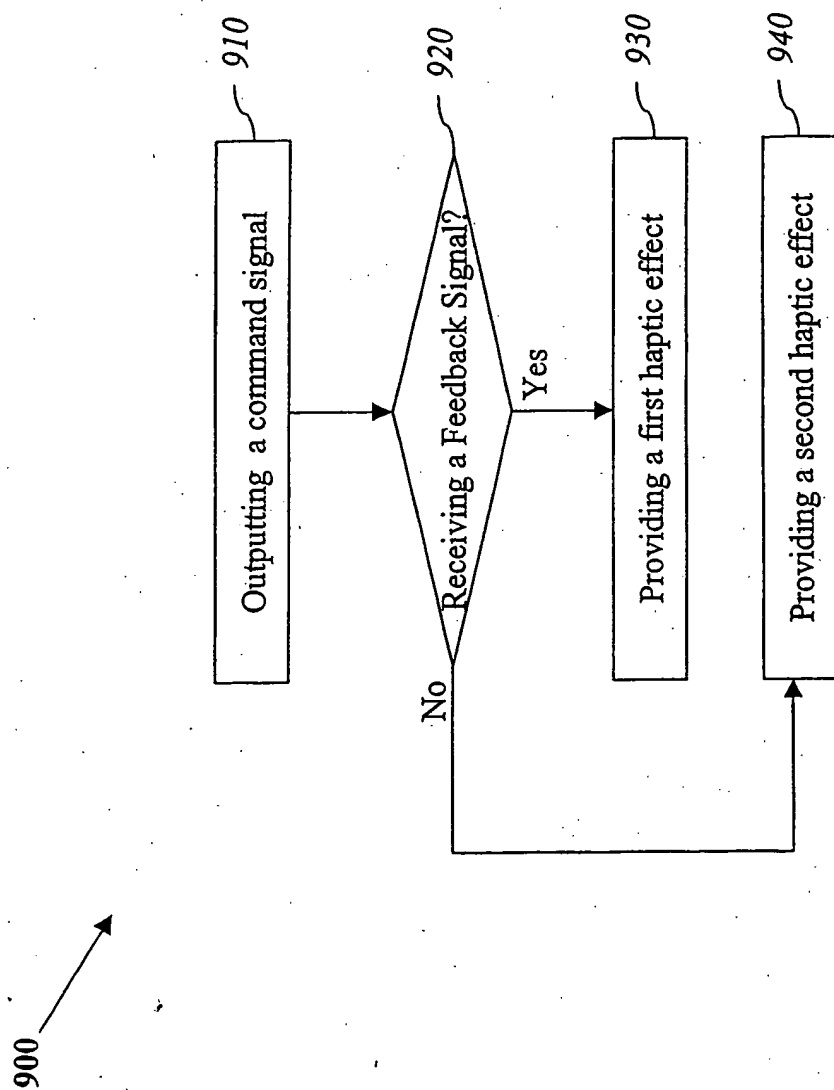


FIG. 9

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US03/38900

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G 06 F 3/00; G 09 G 5/00

US CL : 710/5; 345/702

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 710/5; 345/702

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
Microsoft Computer Dictionary

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
IEEE Xplore database

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X,P	US 2003/0174121 A1 (POUPYREV et al) 18 September 2003 (18.09.2003), paragraphs 3,33,43,46,48,49,74,76-79,81,106,111,128-131.	1-31
X	US 6,429,846 B2 (ROSENBERG et al) 6 August 2002 (06.08.2002), column 2, lines 6-53; column 3, lines 39-63; column 5 lines 10-13; column 6, lines 55-67; column 7, lines 50-65.	1-5,10-13,17,19-25
Y		6-9,14-16,18,26-31
Y	US 6,018,711 (FRENCH-ST. GEORGE et al) 25 January 2000 (25.01.2000), column 3, lines 14-67, column 5 lines 33-37.	6-9,14-16,18,26-31

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

23 March 2004 (23.03.2004)

Date of mailing of the international search report

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